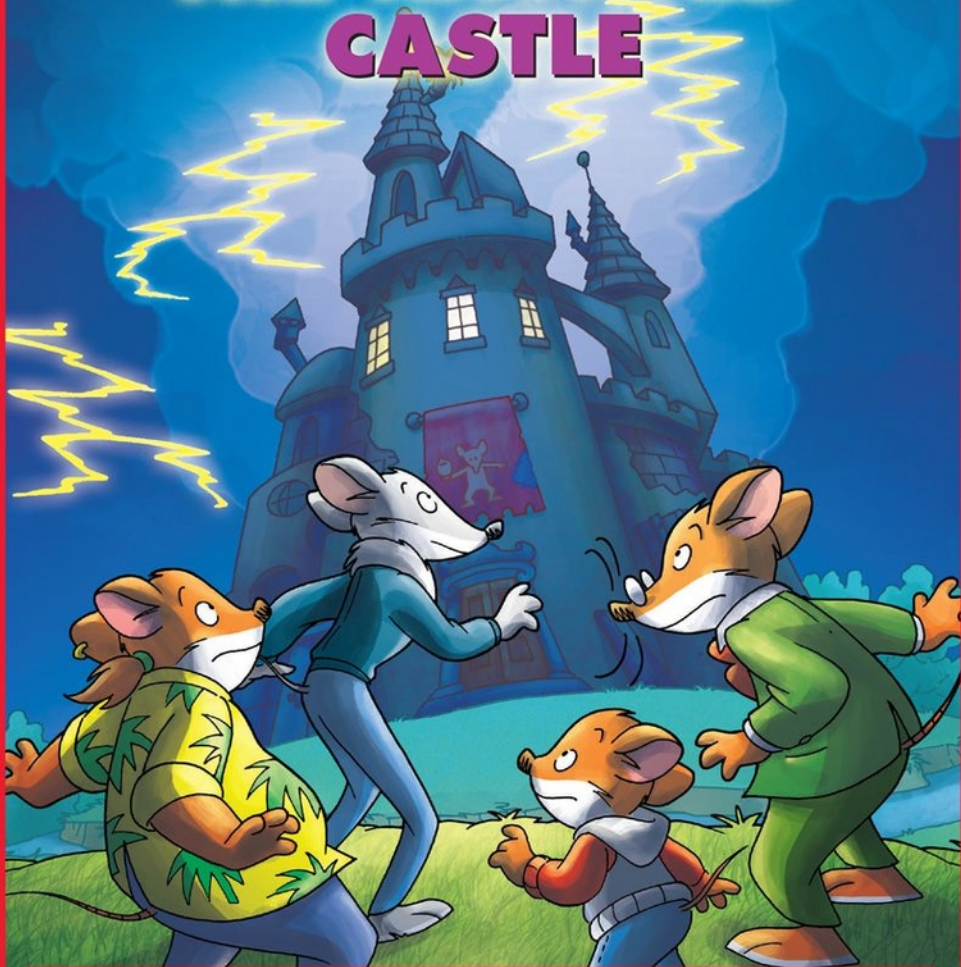




Geronimo Stilton

THE HAUNTED CASTLE

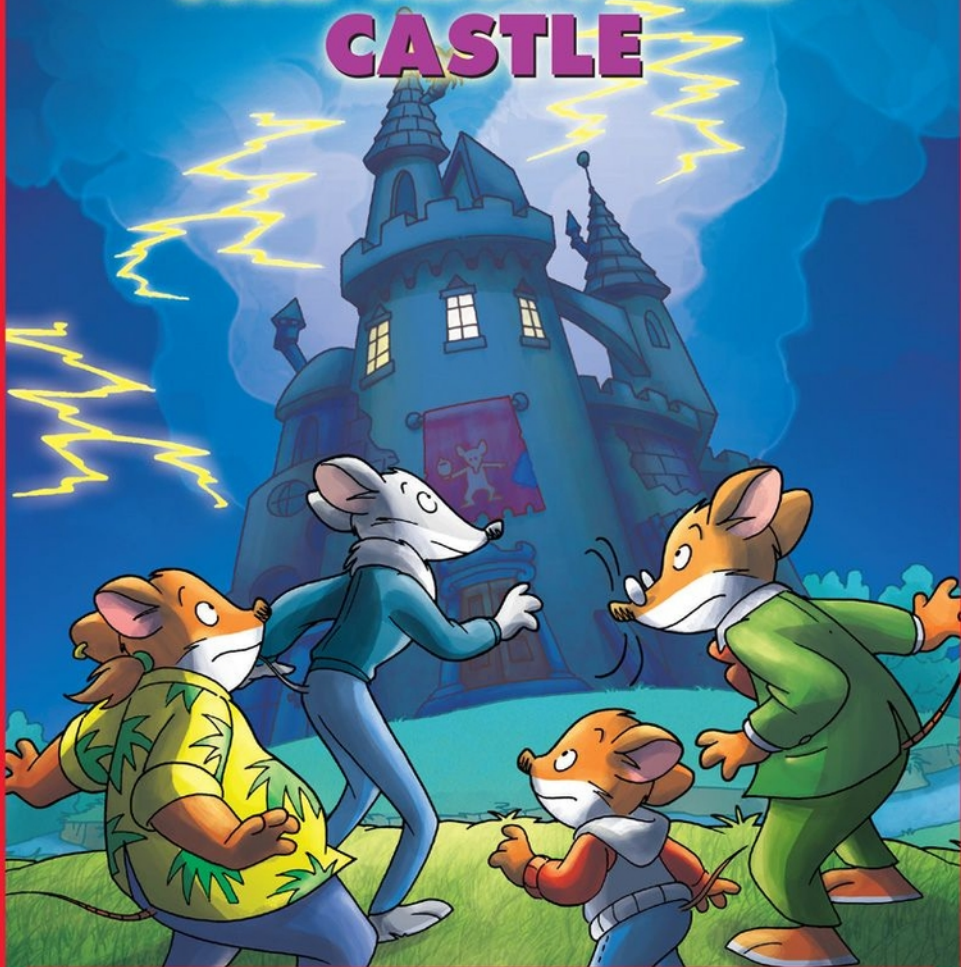


SCHOLASTIC



Geronimo Stilton

THE HAUNTED CASTLE



SCHOLASTIC

Dear mouse friends,
Welcome to the world of



Geronimo Stilton



THE RODENT'S GAZETTE
EDITORIAL STAFF





Geronimo Stilton

A learned and brainy mouse; editor of *The Rodent's Gazette*



Thea Stilton

Geronimo's sister and special correspondent at *The Rodent's Gazette*



Trap Stilton

An awful joker; Geronimo's cousin and owner of the store Cheap Junk for Less



Benjamin Stilton

A sweet and loving nine-year-old mouse; Geronimo's favorite nephew

Geronimo Stilton

THE HAUNTED CASTLE



Scholastic Inc.

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Based on an original idea by Elisabetta Dami.

www.geronimostilton.com

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PHONE CALL FOR MR. STILTON!

It began like any other ordinary morning.

As usual, I woke up in a great mood.

As usual, I scurried over to my office.

As usual, I squeaked “good morning” to all my colleagues.

Oh, excuse me. I almost forgot to introduce myself. My name is Stilton, *Geronimo Stilton*. I am the editor of the most famous





collect? It was so **strange**!

“A **collect call** means **YOU PAY** for the phone call!” the operator explained. Well, of course I knew that! “Do you accept the charges? Hmmm? Do you accept or not? I need an answer here! *I don't have all day to twiddle my whiskers while you make up your mind, you know!*”

“Oh, I'm sorry. I was a bit distracted by the buzzing on the line,” I explained. “I accept, of course!”

Suddenly, I heard a **familiar** voice squawk, “Geronimo? Is that you, Geronimo?”

Bzzzzzzz . . . bzzz . . .

I **recognized** that squeak right away. It belonged to my **Uncle Samuel S. Stingysnout**!





MY WHISKERS WERE SHAKING . . .

“Geronimo!” Uncle Samuel shouted. “I’m calling to invite you to **Penny Pincher Castle** for the **ceremony** that will take place on October thirty-first. Will you come or not?”

I didn’t have a clue what he was talking about. “What **ceremony**?” I asked.

“You know, the **ceremony**, Geronimo!” he yelled. “**THE C-E-R-E-M-O-N-Y!**”

“Yes, I heard you, but what **ceremony** are you squeaking about?” I asked, trying to be polite.

“**GERONIMO!**” he hollered. “**ALL** the relatives are coming! The only one who won’t be there is **YOU!**”

I was starting to lose my patience. “But



what is this **ceremony**?”

He continued as though I hadn't spoken. “Plus I've **organized** everything! You wouldn't want me to **waste** all that effort, would you?” Before I could get a squeak in edgewise, he went on, “So it's all settled, then. I will expect you, **Benjamin**, **Thea**, and **Trap** for the **ceremony**. . . .”

At that point, my whiskers were shaking with exasperation. “**WHAT CEREMONY???**” I shrieked.

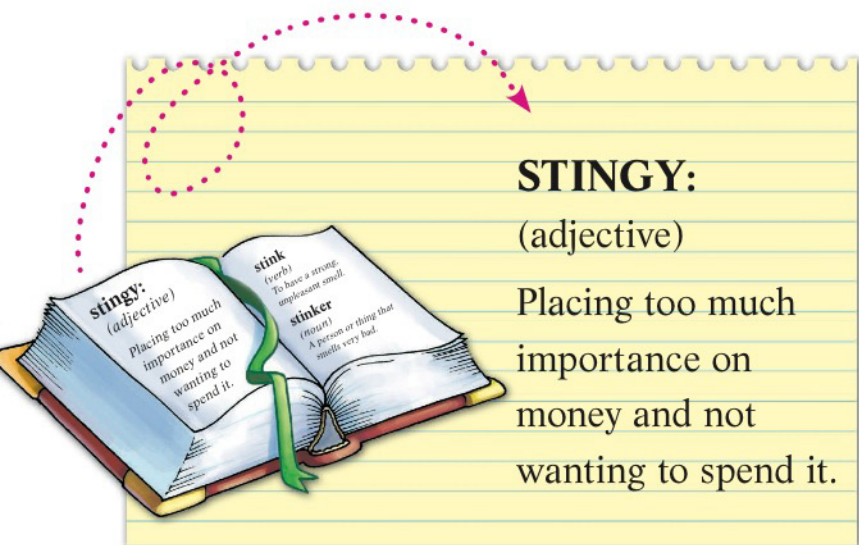




That was when we got cut off.

It was all so **strange**! You see, the relationship between the *Stilton* family and the *Stingysnout* family is strained, for one simple reason: The Stingysnouts are a bit **stingy**.

If you look up the word *stingy* in the **DICTIONARY**, you'll find this definition:





I told my sister **THEA**, my cousin **TRAP**, and my nephew **BENJAMIN** that we had been invited to Penny Pincher Castle. These were their reactions:



"I don't want to go to Penny Pincher Castle! It's colder than iced cheese there — all because Uncle Samuel won't spend the money to turn on the heat."



"I don't want to go to Penny Pincher Castle! there's never anything to eat there — all because Uncle Samuel won't spend the money to put cheese in the fridge."



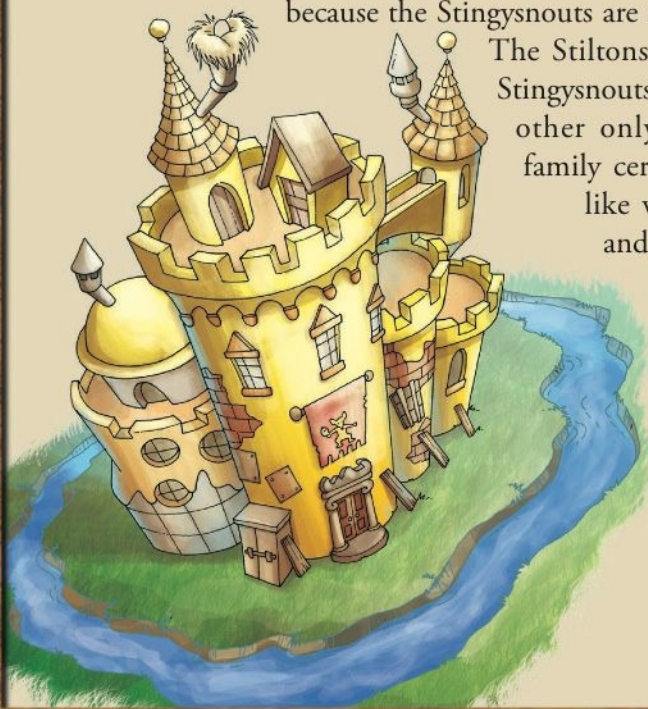
"I don't want to go to Penny Pincher Castle! It's so dark and spooky there — all because Uncle Samuel won't spend the money to turn on the lights."

The Stingysnout Family

The Stingysnouts come from the Valley of Lack, where the ancestral family home, Penny Pincher Castle, is located on top of Cheap Change Hill. For years, Uncle Samuel has lived there with his son, Stevie, and his younger sister, Chintzina.

Years and years ago, Samuel's great-grandfather, Cheddar Cheapskate Stingysnout, married Serena Stilton, Geronimo's great-grandmother. Despite being distantly related, the two families do not get along — mostly because the Stingysnouts are so cheap!

The Stiltons and the Stingysnouts see each other only during family ceremonies, like weddings and funerals.



Samuel Stingysnout

The head of the Stingysnout family, Samuel, is a real master of frugality. His motto is "I need to set an example for the other Stingysnouts!" He prides himself on finding new (and often extreme) ways to save money. He's been known to wake before dawn so he can sneak over to his neighbor's house to read his newspaper instead of buying his own.

Samuel washes himself without soap so he doesn't have to purchase any. He refuses to spend money on toilet paper, and some family members believe he's been wearing the same pair of underwear for more than a decade. He even wears pants inside out so he doesn't have to wash them!

When Samuel makes tea, he dips the tea bag in the water for a second — PLUNK — and then he takes it out right away. "This way tea bags can last for years and years," he tells anyone who will listen. But perhaps his cheapest (and grossest) habit is this: After he brushes his fur, he pulls stray whiskers out of the comb and uses them as dental floss. Eww!



The Stingysnout Family

The Stingysnouts are distantly related to the Stiltons. Not all of them are able to make it to the ceremony (probably because they don't want to spend money on the trip!)

STEVIE Samuel's son. When it's time to bathe, he soaps himself up while he's still dry and turns on the shower at the last minute to save money on hot water.

CHINTZINA Samuel's younger sister. When she was a mouseling, she never laughed, because she didn't want to waste energy.

THRIFTELLA Stevie's cousin. For perfume, she uses only free samples.



SAMUEL S. STINGYSNOUT Geronimo's uncle. He wakes up early to read his neighbor's newspaper.

PENNIFORD AND SAVEANNA Ivy's children, Samuel's niece and nephew. They make cheddar pops last for three years by taking one lick at a time and then wrapping them up again.

WORTHINGTON Thriftella's twin brother. He always wears the same shirt; his secret is that he changes its patches every three years.

HOARDEN ACCOUNTS

Ivy's husband. In the winter, he wears three pairs of long underwear so he doesn't have to turn the heat on.

MICHAEL MISERMOUSE

Samuel's cousin and an antiques dealer. He sells old bread crusts, passing them off as ancient sculptures.

IVY Samuel's daughter. She doesn't pronounce double letters so she can save her breath. She's the spitting image of her father.

ZELDA Stevie's journalist cousin. She wears shoes with heels made of steel so they don't wear out.

FRUGELLA

Michael's sister and Samuel's cousin. She eats only fat-free cheese so she can save calories.

GRANDMA CHEAPERLY Samuel's mother. She recycles old bedsheets to make her blouses.

GRANDPA CHEAPERLY Samuel's father. He always leaves the house in slippers so he doesn't wear out the soles of his shoes.





ALL RIGHT, I'LL GO

I convinced Thea, Trap, and Benjamin to **GO** anyway. After all, family is family! Plus it seemed like this **ceremony** was important.

“All right, I’ll go.” Thea sighed. “As long as we take my **convertible**. But Gerry Berry, what’s the scoop on this **ceremony**?”

“All right, I’ll go,” Trap mumbled. “But no way am I getting in that girly **PINK** convertible. Let’s go in my **van**.”



My convertible is perfect!



My van is better!



And, Germeister, what's the deal with this **ceremony**?"

"All right, I'll go," Benjamin squeaked. "But can we please take an **airplane**? And, Uncle Geronimo, can you explain what this **ceremony** is?"

"All right, I'll go." I sighed. "Even though I don't have a clue what the **ceremony** is. But only if you all quit arguing! You know I can't stand **bickering**!"

Thea took advantage of the confusion and **JUMPED** into her car. "You're right,



The Road to Penny Pincher Castle



1. LONELINESS PASSAGE
2. PARSIMONIOUS PEAK
3. REDUCTION RIVER
4. THE VALLEY OF LACK
5. LITTLE LAKE
6. SCANTYTOWN
7. PENNY PINCHER CASTLE



Gerry. Let's stop this silly squabbling. Come on, everyone, hop in!"

Trap grabbed the map of Mouse Island. Once I managed to convince him he was holding it upside down, we figured out the **route** we needed to take. Thea revved up the engine, I clutched my stomach nervously (I always get carsick when she drives!), and we departed.

By **LATE EVENING**, we arrived at the Valley of Lack. It is called the Valley of Lack because it is **lacking** in everything. There is little water and very little light, so there are very *few* plants. There are even *fewer* animals: very *few* birds in the sky, very *few* fish in the rivers, and very *few* squirrels in the forest. Even the **inhabitants** of the valley are *scarce*, and they squeak very *little* (to save their breath!).



To enter the valley, you must **cross** a *little*-known gorge called Loneliness Passage. Next you must bump along a very *infrequently* used **street**. (To save money, it has never been paved!)

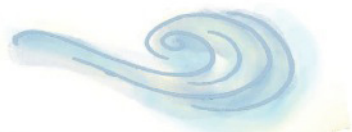
At the end of the valley is the Reduction River, which merges with the river in New Mouse City. The river **water** is **ALWAYS** very *low*. At the end of the river is Little Lake, which holds just a *drop* of water, with *few* fish, *few* ducks, and *few* **REEDS**.

Before arriving at Penny Pincher Castle, you must pass through a small city called Scantytown, which can be **reached** by only *one* road that has just *one* lane. In the village, we *passed* very *few* stores, only *one* town square, and very, very *few* rodents.

As we drove, the weather grew worse. The sky turned black and threatened to **Storm**.



A freezing wind whipped up. Then it began to pour.



What thunder!

Badaboom Badaboom Badaboom Badaboom

What lightning!

Even my sister the speed rat was forced to drive slowly and carefully. We continued to the highest peak of the mountain, where **Penny Pincher Castle** was located.

As we drove, we saw a *lightning bolt* hit Uncle Samuel's castle!

Eeeeeek! Benjamin leaped into my lap in terror. I leaped into Trap's.

WHAT A FRIGHT!





THE VERY SADDEST OF CEREMONIES

We knocked on the great door of **Penny Pincher Castle**. A thin rodent with hazel fur and **bushy** white eyebrows came out. He was dressed all in black, like an **UNDERTAKER**. It was **Uncle Samuel**!



He was crying so hard, tears were **dripping** down his snout like a fountain. He reached out and dried his **tears** on my **SLEEVE**!



“Hello, my dear niece and nephews, my most delicate cheese niblets,” Uncle Samuel **bawled**. “Thank goodness you’ve arrived in time for the **ceremony**!”





few feet from us, **illuminating** the castle with a very **SINISTER** light.

“**Eeeeeeeek!** This weather is downright terrifying!” I squeaked.

Uncle Samuel, on the other paw, was pleased. “I absolutely **adore** this weather! You see, when lightning strikes, there is no need to **turn on the lights**, and we can save money on our electric bill!”

“Uncle Samuel, **can you please let us in?**” Thea asked impatiently. “It’s raining cats and rats out here!”

Uncle Samuel just giggled. “Splendid! There will be no need to **take a shower**, and we can save money on our water bill!”

I rolled my eyes. There was no reasoning with this rodent.





BUT JUST WHO WAS UNCLE BIGWIG?

Uncle Samuel let us in and *guided* us down a **dark hallway**, which had no electricity (to save money!). To *light* the way, he held up a five-armed candelabra with just **ONE** candle in it (to save money, of course!).

The castle seemed much more **run-down** than the last time I'd seen it.

It really was in need of some **RESTORATION**! Drops of **water** were falling from the ceiling, the floors were full of **HOLES**, and the walls were **moldy**.

"So, Uncle Samuel," Thea began, "just how old was *Uncle Bigwig*?"

Uncle Samuel murmured, "Um . . . maybe sixty . . . or seventy . . . no, he was eighty!"







“What kind of work did *Uncle Bigwig* do?”
Trap asked.

“Uhm . . . maybe a **painter** . . . or a lifeguard . . . no, no, he was a lawyer!”

“Where did *Uncle Bigwig* live?” Benjamin inquired.

“Um . . . maybe in Mousefort Beach . . . or San Mouscisco . . . no, no, he lived in Scantytown!”

“So who exactly was *Uncle Bigwig*?” I demanded.

“Oh, Uncle Bigwig was the heir to **ALL THE** Stingysnout property!” Uncle Samuel said quickly. “It was all his! Even this castle belonged to him!”

I found this all very **strange**! How could this castle belong to a mouse none of us had ever heard of?





THE STILTON FAMILY


Finally, we arrived in the enormous banquet hall. All the relatives were gathered there — the *Stiltons* and the *Stingysnouts*. First we saw Aunt *Sugarfur* and Uncle *Kindpaws* with the twins, *Squeakette* and *Squeaky*. Grandma *Rose* was there, too. She had left Grandpa *Hayfur* to care for the farm so that she could take part in the *ceremony* (which showed how important this *ceremony* was!).

In the middle of the room, standing tall, was *Grandpa William Shortpaws*. As soon as he saw me, he squeaked, “Well, well, well, Grandson. You’re late as usual! Come on, move those paws!”

Next to Grandfather William were *Tina Spicetail*, Aunt *Sweetfur*, and Uncle *Grayfur*.



And of course Uncle Gagrato and Uncle Worrywhiskers never missed a big family event.

Suddenly, someone **BLASTED** a toy trumpet in my ear. I almost jumped out of my fur. “**AAAAAAGGGGGHHHH!**” 

Once my ears stopped ringing, I shouted, “**WHO DID THAT?**”

Naturally, it was Uncle **Gagrato**, who is famous for being the family prankster! “**Got ya** again, Geronimo!” he said triumphantly.

Trap giggled. “Good one! Germeister is such a ‘fraidy mouse!”

I turned **RED** with **EMBARRASSMENT**. As you’ve probably guessed, Trap and Uncle Gagrato come from the same branch of the family tree.

The Stilton Family



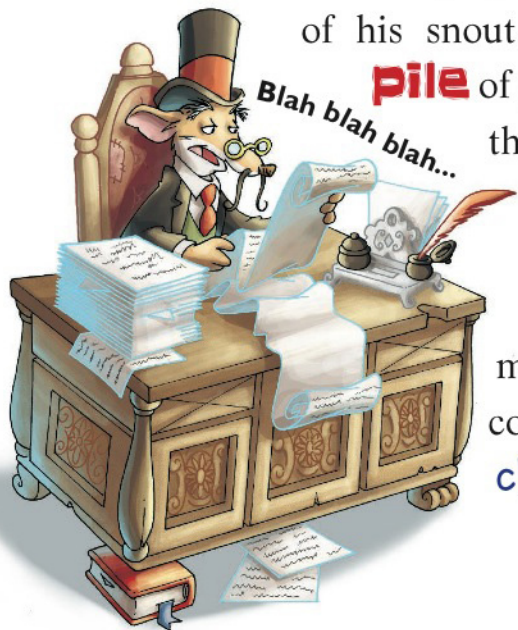


UNCLE BIGWIG'S LAST WILL & TESTAMENT

Uncle Samuel announced, "It is time for Larry Legalmouse, Uncle Bigwig's lawyer, to read the *will*."

Larry Legalmouse entered. He was a skinny mouse who wore tiny spectacles on the tip of his snout. He consulted a **pile** of papers, cleared his throat, and *began*.

"Ahem, well, *here we are*, right, rather, I mean, *as it stands*, considering, *let me clarify*, so that,





despite the fact, *be that as it may*, surely, *but*, however . . .”

A rumble of impatience rose from the *Stilton* and *Stingysnout* families. Finally, Trap *shouted*, “Enough of this legal mumbo jumbo! Just cut to the cheese already!”

“Now, now, I know you’re all *anxious* to hear what’s in the will, but there’s no need to be rude!” the lawyer declared. “*Just one minute!*” Then he cleared his throat and began to read the *will*:

“I, Bigwig Stingysnout, leave all that I own to . . .”

The whole family whispered, “To . . . ?”

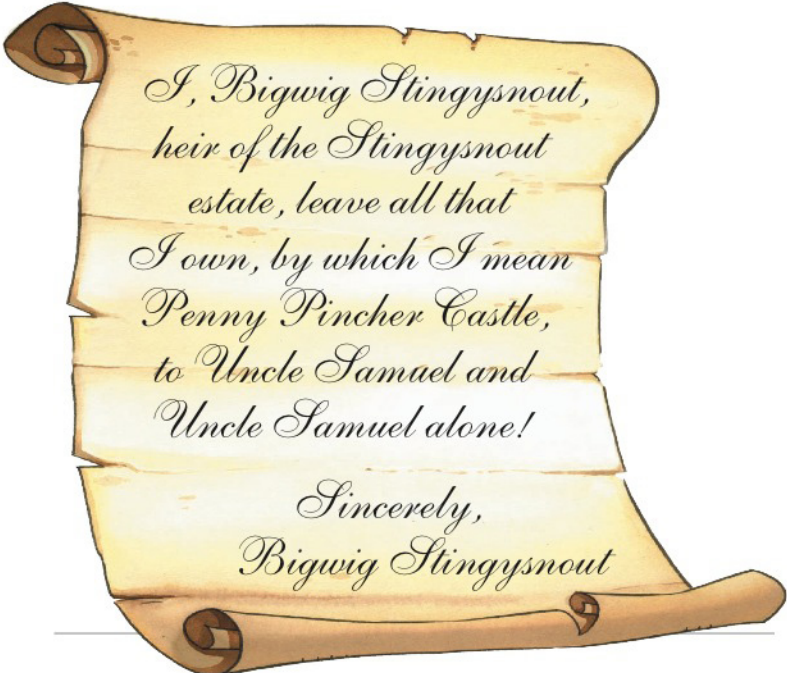
“I, Bigwig Stingysnout, leave all that I own to . . .”

The whole family *shouted*: “To whooooooooooooommmmm?”



"I, Bigwig Stingysnout, heir of the Stingysnout estate, leave all that I own, by which I mean Penny Pincher Castle, to Uncle Samuel and Uncle Samuel alone!"

"YES!" Uncle Samuel exclaimed. "Uncle Bigwig left me the **CASTLE!**" He pumped his paw in the air like a mouseling at a mouseketball game.



*I, Bigwig Stingysnout,
heir of the Stingysnout
estate, leave all that
I own, by which I mean
Penny Pincher Castle,
to Uncle Samael and
Uncle Samuel alone!*

*Sincerely,
Bigwig Stingysnout*





I found this all quite **STRANGE!**

Uncle Samuel cleared his throat.
“In order to **celebrate** my new ownership of the **CASTLE**, I want to offer a drink to everyone: **A NICE GLASS OF WATER**, which will refresh you (and help save money).”



I sighed. So did the rest of the family.

Then Uncle Samuel **ANNOUNCED**,
“Then I will give a short — I mean very, very, very short — in fact, the very shortest of **EULOGIES** in honor of our dear Uncle Bigwig!”

With that, he **began** a long, very long, in fact, one might say it was the loooooooooooooongest of speeches.

“I will be brief, no, very brief, no, the briefest, I will not make a long speech — no, no, no, what I mean to say is that I don’t want to bore you with my words, I will not



keep you all here when you no doubt have better things to do, no, I will not speak for hours and hours and hours and hours and hours and hours and hours and hours and hours and hours and hours and hours and hours and hours and hours and hours, telling you all sorts of things that you don't care about, things that might be boring, things that might interest only me, what I mean is, things that are from my point of view, things I feel, things I notice, things I perceive, things you would avoid hearing if you could, well, what I am trying to say is that today I will not make a boring, rather very boring, in fact the most boring of funeral speeches, I imagine that if I did, you might fall asleep, ha, ha, ha, I realize that maybe you don't want to hear me, so I

know long speeches are boring and I don't want to bore you, no, no, no, absolutely not, there is no way that I plan to bore my dear relatives, family is the most important thing in the world, ha, ha, ha, even though we are talking about death, your happiness is very important to me, so I will make a short and painless speech, I will try to sum up in a few, rather very few, that is, the fewest of words, the basic concepts, as it were. So as I was saying, it is time to bury Uncle Bigwig!"





VERY STRANGE INDEED!

Even though the **speech** was incredibly long and boring, I managed to stay awake. And I noticed that Uncle Samuel didn't say *anything* specific about Uncle Bigwig.

I found that quite **strange**!

As I *chatted* with the other Stilton and Stingysnout relatives, I noticed that *not one of them* seemed to know Uncle Bigwig. As far as I could tell, the only one who knew him was **Uncle Samuel**.

I found that very *strange*!

Out of curiosity, I went to look in the Stingysnouts' family *album*, which listed all the relatives — including their first names, last names, and **PHOTOGRAPHS**. But

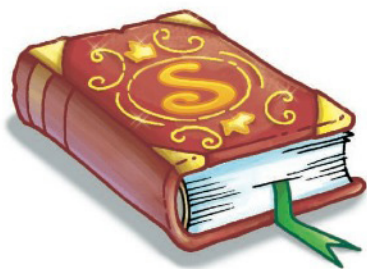
the album was missing!

Who had taken it?

Who?

Who??

Who???



I found it all very, very **strange**!

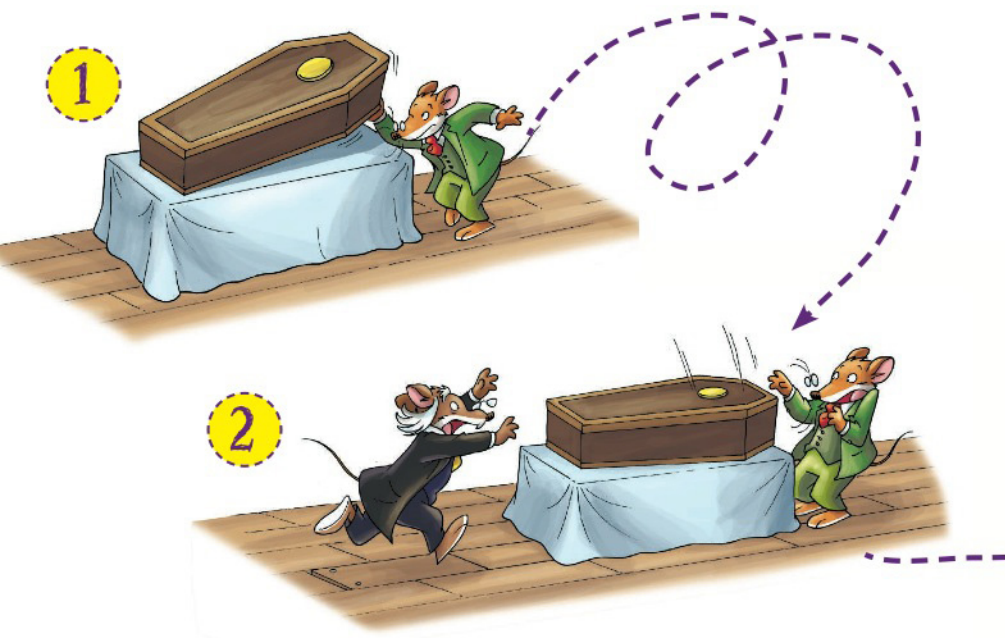
Uncle Samuel **moaned**, “Ooohhh, poor, dear Uncle Bigwig! How he will be missed!” He accompanied us to a room next to the banquet hall. A **COFFIN** sat in the center of the room. Then he left, closing the door behind him.

Although I didn’t remember Uncle Bigwig, I was still **SAD** that he was gone. So I headed toward the **COFFIN** to pay my respects.

Now, as you know, dear reader, I am not the most coordinated of rodents. Without meaning to, I **tripped** and bumped into the coffin. That was how I discovered it was

so light it almost seemed . . . **empty!**

I extended my **paw** to see why it was so light **①**, but right at that moment, **Uncle Samuel** returned and **yelled**, “Geronimo, stop, what are you doing? **Don't touch that!**” **②** He was so alarmed he tripped, too! He bumped into the coffin and accidentally pushed it off the table — onto my paws! **③**

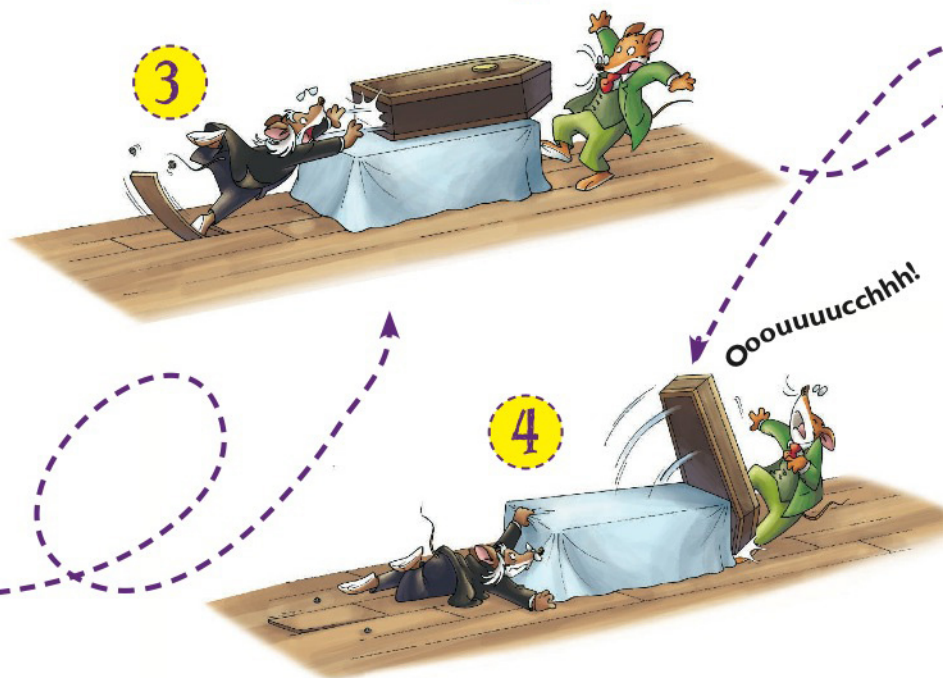


“**O O O U U U U C C H H H !**” I shrieked. **4** But before I could move . . .

“**No one** touch the coffin!” Uncle Samuel commanded. “Uncle Bigwig . . . ummm . . . has left us because of a very contagious disease . . . er, **acute ratitis!**”

I was truly shocked. I had never, **ever** heard of acute ratitis!

I found that very **strange** indeed!





SWEET DREAMS!

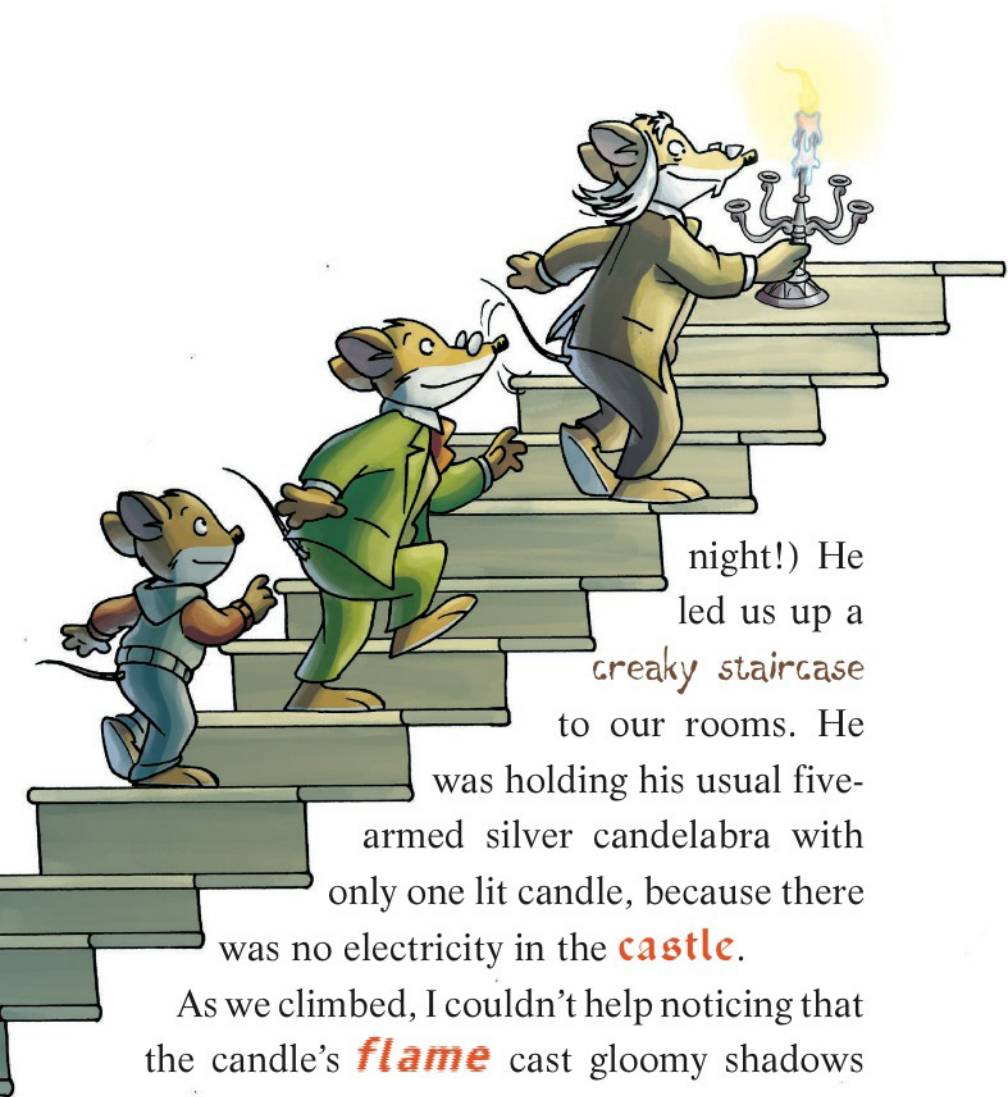
By this time, it was quite **late** at night, and it was pouring rain outside.

"It's too late for a burial now," Thea declared.

"Quite right, my little **CHEESE PUFF**," said Grandfather William. Thea was his favorite grandchild. "We will bury Uncle Bigwig **TOMORROW**!"

Uncle Samuel reluctantly agreed. (He'd probably figured out a way to save **money** by burying Uncle Bigwig in the middle of the





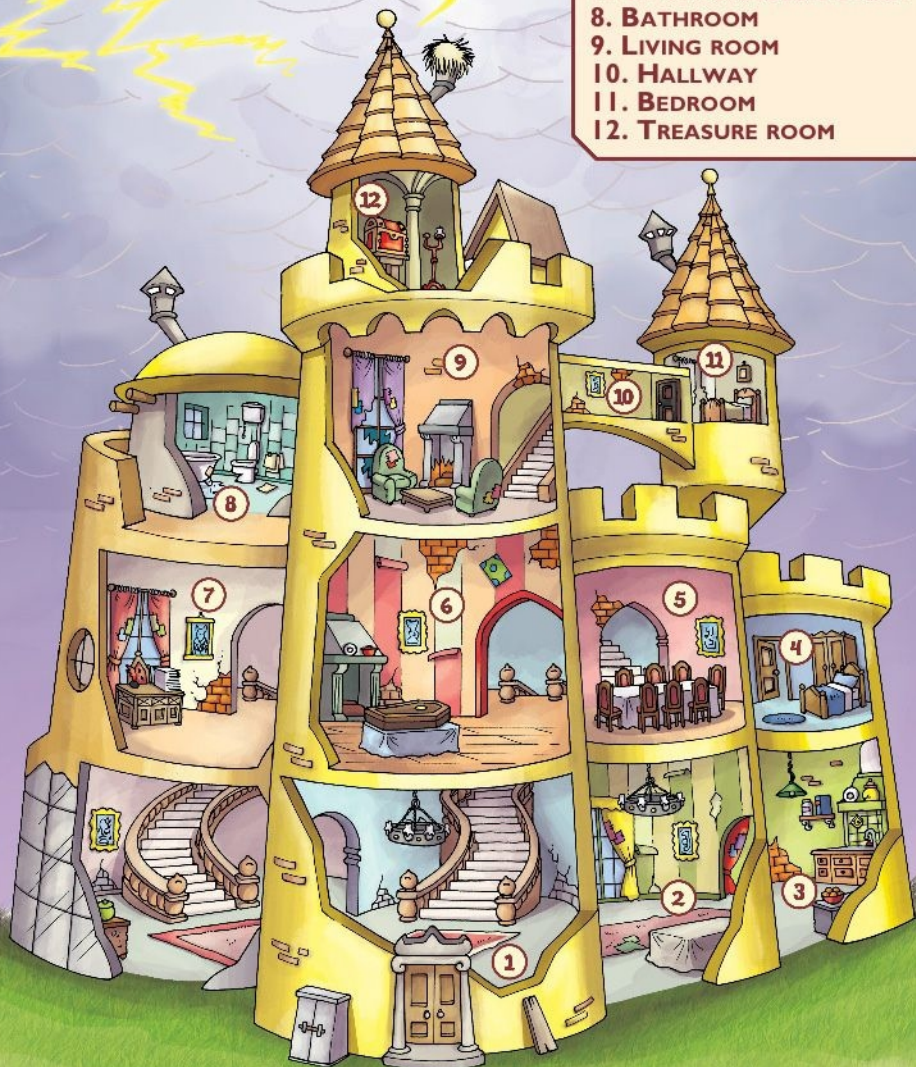
night!) He led us up a creaky staircase to our rooms. He was holding his usual five-armed silver candelabra with only one lit candle, because there was no electricity in the **castle**.

As we climbed, I couldn't help noticing that the candle's **flame** cast gloomy shadows on the walls. I heard Uncle Samuel whisper under his breath, "I can't bear to think of how much money this **candle** is costing me!"

PENNY PINCHER CASTLE

SOUTH SIDE

1. ENTRANCE
2. SITTING ROOM
3. KITCHEN
4. BEDROOM
5. BANQUET HALL
6. GREAT HALL
7. UNCLE SAMUEL'S STUDY
8. BATHROOM
9. LIVING ROOM
10. HALLWAY
11. BEDROOM
12. TREASURE ROOM



PENNY PINCHER CASTLE



NORTH SIDE

- 1. WELL
- 2. PANTRY
- 3-7. BEDROOMS

8-9. BATHROOMS

- 10. AUNT CHINTZINA'S
STUDY
- 11. ATTIC



Uncle Samuel

accompanied Thea, Trap, and Benjamin to their rooms. Then he led me a bit farther to a **DARK DOOR**, murmuring, “For you, *dear* nephew, I have saved the *best* room . . . the room where our *dearly departed* used to sleep. That’s right — it’s Uncle Bigwig’s old room!” **THEN HE BLEW HIS SNOUT ON MY TIE.**

I muttered, “Er, thank you, Uncle Samuel, but I can sleep somewhere else —”

“No, no, no, **I insist.** You will sleep here!” He opened the door, and the



room **lit up** (well, barely, since we only had one candle). The walls were covered with peeling paint. In the middle of the room was a very, very old bed that wobbled on just three legs.

Uncle Samuel
**BLEW HIS SNOUT
ON THE SLEEVE
OF MY JACKET.**





“Poor Uncle Bigwig . . . Everything is just the way he left it before he . . . well, you know . . . before he **croaked!**”

With that he left, muttering, “Good night, **dear** Nephew. A bit of advice: *Don’t* think too much about our dear **uncle**. *Don’t* worry about catching acute ratitis. *Don’t* think about the fact that this was his **ROOM**. And *don’t* think about the fact that he **DIED** right here in this bed. *Don’t* think about the fact that we will **BURY** him tomorrow, and *don’t* think about the legend of Penny Pincher Castle — you know, the one about it being full of **ghosts**. I guess what I mean is . . . sweet dreams!”

BEFORE HE LEFT, HE BLEW HIS SNOOT ON THE COLLAR OF MY JACKET.

“Uncle, don’t you have a tissue?” I groaned. He nodded mournfully. “I do have one, but



I don't want to use it up!"

Once he was gone, I slipped under the covers fully clothed. I was **freezing** my tail off!

I tried to think happy thoughts. But it was hard. "*Oh, for the love of all that's warm and cheesy . . . what **mouse bumps!***"

I had the mouse bumps because:

a) I was in the dark! Uncle Samuel took the candle with him (to save money!).



b) It was terribly cold! The flames in the fireplace weren't real, but were painted on (to save money!).



c) I kept hearing creepy noises!

The windows creaked. The glass was broken and hadn't been repaired (to save money!).

d) I was petrified! It was so drafty the curtains blew around and looked like ghosts!





NIGHT FRIGHTS!

I tried to **sleep**, but I couldn't. I was **TOO AFRAID!**

It was a dark and stormy night. **LIGHTNING BOLTS** lit up the windows and cast **SPOOKY** shadows over the room. The wind whistled and seemed to whisper: **BIG WIG...**

BIG WIIIIIG...

BIIIIIGWIIIIIG...

I decided to go down to the kitchen to make myself some hot tea. Maybe I wouldn't be so terrified if I had a nice, full belly.

I tiptoed down the **CREAKY** staircase,

BIGWIG...

BIGWIIIIIG...

BIIIIIGWIIIIIIIG...



feeling my way carefully, because I didn't have a candle. I was almost glad of the darkness . . . who knows what horrors would have been visible if it had been light?

At last, I arrived in the kitchen. Thank goodness!

Just then, I heard someone pawing around behind the corner — and a **monstrous** shadow appeared on the wall! A huge, threatening paw was reaching for me! It looked like the claw of an enormous cat!

“Wh-who's there?” I cried.

What could it be?

From behind the corner, out popped —
THEA, **Trap**, and **Benjamin**!

“Huh? You're here, too?” they **YELPED**.

“Huh? You're here, too?” I **YELPED**.

“We wanted to make some hot **tea**,” my sister explained.



Help!



It turned out making hot **tea** was easier said than done! We looked through all the cupboards and found only *one* tea bag, which, naturally, had been used!

While we **HEATED** up the water, I decided to confide in my family. “There’s something **bizarre** about that coffin. It is way too light. It’s very **strange**!”



“Hmm, well, why don’t we go **check it out**?” Thea suggested. That’s my sister for you. She’s totally fearless!

I **shuddered** at the thought. The idea of touching that *thing* made my fur stand **on end**.

But not Thea’s. She **scurried** into the room with the **coffin**. She felt around in the dark until she found it. Then she lifted the cover and cried out, “**IT’S EMPTYYYYYYYYYYYY!**”

NIGHT



FRIGHTS!

It's emptyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy!
It's emptyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy!
It's emptyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy!
It's emptyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy!

Emptyyyyyyyy???

Emptyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy??

It's emptyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy??





STOP, YOU LITTLE FUR BALL!

“THE COFFIN IS EMPTY!”

Thea squeaked in disbelief.

“Wh-wh-what?” I stammered. “The coffin is empty?” I gulped. “Does that mean Uncle Bigwig has come back to **LIFE**?! Maybe — maybe he’s a zombie!”

“Creepy cheese curls, where is Uncle Bigwig?” Trap **screeched**.

“What if Uncle Bigwig never existed?!” Benjamin whispered.

At that moment, I glimpsed a shadow slipping by us. By this time, my nerves were totally shattered. “**Aaaaaaaaaaaaaagh!!!**” I shrieked.

STOP, YOU LITTLE



FUR BALL!

The **shadow** was as quick as lightning. Faster than the mouse who ran up the clock, it **SPED** toward the corridor.

But Trap grabbed it by the **tail**. “Stop, you little fur ball!”

We lit a candle, which **revealed** a snout with hazel-colored **fur** and bushy white eyebrows.

“**WHAAAAAAT?**” we all shouted in shock.





"Huh?"



"Uncle Samuel?"



"What are you doing here?"



"And why is the coffin empty?"



"Oh, forgive me, my dears! I think
I have a little explaining to do. . . ."



IT WAS ALL A TRICK!

“Forgive you?!? Why?” Thea demanded.

“Just what *do you need to explain?*” Trap asked, looking skeptical.

By this time, we had made quite a ruckus. One by one, our other family members began trickling into the room. After a few minutes, all the *Stiltons* and all the *Stingysnouts* had arrived.

We listened in silence while Samuel *tearfully* tried to explain. “Okay, I will tell you everything — **absolutely everything!**” He took a deep breath before continuing. “A few weeks ago, I found an ancient scroll in one of the drawers in the **Great Hall**. When I found this *scroll*, I was afraid that I



would have to share the castle with all of the *Stingysnouts* and all of the *Stiltons*,” Uncle Samuel sobbed. “I am old, and I have lived my whole life in this **castle**. This is my home, and I am very attached to these walls! **I was afraid of losing my home. Do you understand?** I was so afraid I made up Uncle Bigwig and said he was the **SOLE** heir to the Stingysnout fortune. But Uncle Bigwig never existed! I **pretended** he left everything to me — I pretended he was **DEAD** . . . and I invited you all here for this *fake* **ceremony** to read his *fake* will, in which I *made believe* that he left me the **castle**.”

Everyone stared at him in disbelief. Finally, Grandfather William found his squeak. “You mean, it was all *fake*?!”

“**Yesssssss! It was all faaaaaake!**” Uncle Samuel screeched. “No one has died!



As of today, on the occasion of the marriage of Cheddar Cheapskate Stingysnout and Serena Stilton, the Stingysnout and Stilton families are bound together. From this day forward, they promise their eternal friendship.

With this scroll, Cheddar and Serena declare that just as their love will last for eternity, so too will these families forever be friends. They will share the castle in which their love did flourish.

And so Cheddar and Serena leave this castle to all the descendants of the Stingysnout and Stilton families, so that they may always live together in harmony, just as we two do.

*In good faith,
Cheddar and Serena*



Can you ever forgive me, my dear relatives?"

Thea shook her snout. "You found out the castle belonged to **ALL OF US**, and you wanted to keep it **ALL FOR YOURSELF**? That's terrible, Uncle Samuel."

No one knew what to do next. So all the *Stiltons* and all the *Stingysnouts* except me and **Uncle Samuel** shut themselves into the banquet hall to figure it out.

I stayed with **Uncle Samuel** to keep him company. He had been incredibly selfish, it's true, but I didn't want to leave him **alone**.

Uncle Samuel didn't say a word. He just wept quietly.

Finally the door burst open, and the family filed back into the room.

Trap **ANNOUNCED**, "The family has decided to forgive you, but . . ."

"Hooray!" Thank you, thank you!"



Uncle Samuel rejoiced.

“... but we have a few conditions,” Trap continued. “First, you need to **restore** the castle. Next, you must invite **ALL** of us to spend our vacations here!” Trap paused. “And finally, you will pay for our room and board.”

There was a moment’s silence. Then Uncle Samuel muttered, “Restore the castle? Invite guests? Pay for your vacations?” His fur had turned paler than a slice of Swiss. “I see. So — *you want to bankrupt me!*”

With that, he **fainted**.

Gulp!





HOW ABOUT A FEW JOKES?

Benjamin and I helped Uncle Samuel up when he **came to**. There was a moment of silence. Then Uncle Gagratt Stilton **shouted**, "Why so down in the snout, everyone? Never fear, Uncle Gagratt is here to lift your spirits! How about a few **jokes**?"

A mouse walks into a bookstore and asks, "How much for the book *A Thousand and One Nights*?" The salesclerk answers, "That'll be twenty dollars, sir."

The mouse thinks about it for a minute, then replies, "That's too much. How much for just one of the nights?"



What's a cat's motto?

The worst things in life are fleas!

What does a cat read in the morning?

A newspaper!

All of the *Stiltons* laughed — but none of the *Stingysnouts* did!

Uncle Gagratt giggled. “Okay, here’s another one for you. . . .”

Why do lazy rats bake bread?

Because they want to loaf!



All of the *Stiltons* laughed — but none of the *Stingysnouts* did!

Uncle Gagratt pretended not to notice. He continued:

What does a ghost say when he makes a mistake?

"I made a boo-boo!"

How does a mouse feel after taking a shower?

Squeaky clean!

Once again, all of the *Stiltons* laughed — but none of the *Stingysnouts* did!

Uncle Gagratt rolled his eyes. "Oh, you didn't find that funny? I guess you mice



didn't inherit the Stilton funny bone! Don't worry; *I will explain everything later. . . .*"

The Stingysnouts looked at him in confusion. They were whispering behind their **paws**, like they were trying to figure out why Uncle Gagratt was laughing so hard. It was obvious they didn't find his jokes funny. And that seemed to make them sad.

The **SADDEST** one of all was **Chintzina**, Uncle Samuel's younger sister. Chintzina never laughs — Uncle Samuel forbids it. He says that **laughing is a waste of energy!**

I looked at Chintzina more closely. It was hard to tell how old she was. She was dressed in drab, **patched** clothing. She still had curlers in her fur. When I thought about it, I realized she'd been wearing curlers every time I'd seen her! Who knew how she would have looked without them? It was as if they



had become a permanent part of her head.

Chintzina knits in her spare time. Her specialty is **MULTICOLORED** socks, which she makes out of wool she finds here and there. “Put a sock in it, Chintzina! After all, that’s the only thing you know how to make! Ha ha ha!” Uncle Samuel always teases her.





BUT WHO . . . BUT WHY?!

“I don’t get it!” Uncle Gagrut shouted in frustration. “Don’t you mice ever laugh? What about if someone *tickles* your paws with a feather? Not even then, I’ll bet!”



He consulted his favorite book, *The Wacky Rat’s Joklepedia*, and muttered, “Hrm, I *think* there’s a *joke* in here somewhere about — ahh — yes — here it is!” He turned to the group and announced, “I’d like to dedicate this joke to a very *special* rodent, our dear *Chintzina*!”

SPECIAL!

SPECIAL!

SPECIAL!



* WHAT IS COUSIN TRAP'S FAVORITE FOOD?
* PRANK-FURTERS!

All of the *Stiltons* laughed — but none
of the *Stingysnouts* did!

Until Aunt Chintzina
shut her eyes,

wrinkled her lips,

curled her whiskers,

and opened her mouth.

I thought she was about to sneeze, but
instead . . .

SHE BURST OUT LAUGHING!

It was an extraordinary, **UPROARIOUS**,
fabumouse laugh!

In fact, her laughter was so contagious

BUT WHO . . .



BUT WHY?!

Ha ha ha! Ha ha ha!



Hee hee! Ho ho ho! Ha ha ha! Ha ha ha!



BUT WHO . . .



BUT WHY?!

that all the other *Stingysnouts* began to laugh, too!

LAUGHTER IS CONTAGIOUS!

At that moment, Uncle Gagratt whispered, "Nephew, I think I'm in *love* . . ."

"What? When did this happen?" I asked him.

"Just now!" he exclaimed.

I looked around. "But with whom?" I asked.

"With that *enchanting creature*!" he replied.

I looked around again. "What enchanting creature?" I asked in confusion.

He pointed one paw at Chintzina. "She is the rodent of my dreams!"

I was shocked. "But why?"

He sighed dreamily,



BUT WHO . . .



BUT WHY?!

“Aaaaaahhhh, I love her laugh. . . .”





ONE WEEK LATER . . .



For the whole next week, Uncle Gagratt *courted* Aunt Chintzina with a vengeance. He was determined to win her over.

First he brought her a box of *heart*-shaped chocolates, but Uncle Samuel just shouted, “Eating these *sweets* will rot your teeth and cost money at the dentist!”

Poor Chintzina.



Next Uncle Gagratt tried to serenade her from beneath her window, but Uncle Samuel just shouted, “Save your squeak, you silly rodent!”



you're wasting your breath and your time!

And time is money!"

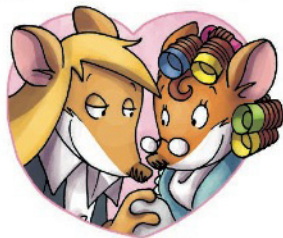
Poor Chintzina.

Next Uncle Gagratt got her a big bouquet of *flowers*, but Uncle Samuel just shouted, "Hmph! Why don't you buy her some vegetable seeds instead! At least then we could plant the seeds and eat the **vegetables** to save money!"

Poor Chintzina.

Meanwhile, however, her love for Uncle Gagratt was growing.

At the end of the week, much to everyone's surprise, Aunt Chintzina and Uncle Gagratt **ANNOUNCED**, "We have some great news! *We want to get married!* In fact, we ARE getting married . . . in a week!"





AN ARTICHOKE BOUQUET

All of the *Stiltons* and all of the *Stingysnouts* were in shock!

“You really want to get married?”

Thea asked excitedly.

“In a week?”

asked Benjamin, his eyes wide.

“WHAAAAT? How much is that going to cost me?” Uncle Samuel shrieked.

“Are you trying to bankrupt me??” Then he **Fainted**.

I woke him up. “Uncle Samuel, it doesn’t matter how much it costs! Look





at Aunt Chintzina! She's happy!"

"Ohh, it's soooo romantic!" Thea sighed.
"They're just like Romeo and Juliet!"

"First the **VACATIONS** at **my expense**, now a **wedding**," Uncle Samuel complained. "My family really **DOES** want to bankrupt me!"

He pulled out a **tattered** notebook and began to write down all sorts of **NUMBERS**. "Let's do the math. Dear **Chintzina**, no **wedding dress**: You



ROMEO AND JULIET is a famous tragedy written by the English poet and playwright William Shakespeare (1564-1616). It tells the story of two young lovers whose families, the Montagues and the Capulets, keep them apart because of a long-standing rivalry.





Wedding dress...



Wedding rings...



Refreshments...



Decorations...



Bouquet...



Invitations...





can get married in what you are wearing right now — a **BATHROBE** and *curlers* (to save money!). Instead of flowers in your bouquet,



we can use a bunch of artichokes from the neighbors' garden (to save money!). Instead of printing wedding **invitations**, we can write them

out by paw on a roll of **toilet paper** (to

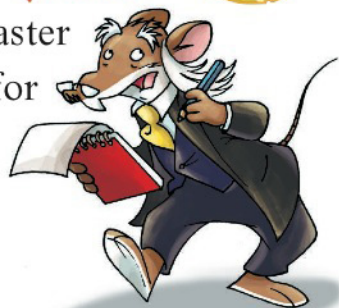


save money!). As for decorations, we won't have any **centerpieces** — instead, let's pick **bunches of weeds** from outside the moat (to save money!). And for the **wedding**

rings, I have just the thing! Two **plastic gold rings** that I found in an Easter



egg. I've been saving them for years, because I knew they'd be useful one day. We won't have a real *wedding reception*; we





can eat in the kitchen (to save money!). It'll be **JUST** the three of us: you, your husband, and me (to save money!). And here's the

Wedding Menu:

Appetizer: **1** bean!

First course: **1** piece of spaghetti with **1** drop of tomato sauce and **1** basil leaf!

Second course: **1** shrimp!

Side dish: **1** leaf of lettuce, dressed with **1** drop of oil, **1** drop of vinegar, and **1** grain of salt!

Dessert: **1** crumb of cake and **1** chocolate!

Followed by: **1** drop of coffee!

Drinks: Unlimited water
(from the faucet)!



menu I've drawn up (to save money!). . . ."

But **Chintzina** was sick of being bossed around by her cheapskate brother. She put her paw down.



"This is going to be the happiest day of my life!" she declared. "I want a real *wedding reception*! I want to share my joy with all of the rodents I hold dear. I'm going to invite *all of the Stiltons* and *all of the Stingsnouts* so I can share everything I have. *Loving* means sharing what you have, however **large** or *small* it may be!"

Uncle Samuel buried his snout in his paws. "First the vacations at my expense, then the *wedding*, and now the *reception*! You all really, really, really do want to bankrupt me!"

He **Fainted** again.





MY, HOW YOU'VE CHANGED!

When we woke up the next day, **Chintzina** was nowhere to be found.

“**Where is my sisteeeeerrrrrrrr???**” Uncle Samuel shrieked.

Trap giggled. “She went to New Mouse City. She said she needed to buy things for the wedding . . . **lots** of things!”

Uncle Samuel turned **WHITER** than fresh





mozzarella. Instinctively, his paw reached for his wallet. “**B**-b-buy things? **F**-f-for the wedding? **L**-l-lots of things?”

Trap nodded, smirking. “Uh-huh. And Chintzina didn’t go alone. She was with her friends: *all of the Stiltons* and *all of the Stingsnouts*! She said she had to go to the **FURDRESSER** . . . to the *beautician* . . . to the **tailOR** . . . to the *florist* . . . to the *perfume shop* . . . to the **jewelry store** . . . and also to —”

Uncle Samuel cut him off with a **shriek**. “Noooooooooooo! How much is all that going to cost me? *You meddling mice are really trying to bankrupt me!*”

He paced **nervously** for hours, waiting for **Chintzina** to return. When she finally scampered through the door, he ran to meet her. “Chintzina!” he gasped. “*You’ve changed more than Lady RatRat at the MouseTV Music Awards!*”

CHINTZINA GOES TO THE CITY



First Chintzina went to the beautician for a nice cheese face mask.



Now her fur is as soft as a peach!



Then she got contact lenses and went to the furdresser for a furcut.



Now she has a chic new do!



Next she went to the tailor to buy a wedding dress.



Now she doesn't have to wear patched clothing!



After that, Chintzina went to the flower shop to pick a bouquet for the wedding.



Now she's blooming like her flowers!



Then she went to the jewelry store and bought a new necklace.



Now she feels like a real glamour mouse!



Finally, she went to the perfume shop to get a new scent!



Now she smells as good as she looks!



LOVE IS THE BEST BEAUTY SECRET!

The rodent in front of us was unrecognizable.

it was chintzina . . .

but it wasn't . . .

but it was!

“Yes, I’ve changed, Samuel,” she said, smiling. “This morning I got up and said to myself, ‘**Enough with these curlers!**’ So I made a few **changes**. What do you think?”

Samuel opened his snout to ask, “What did all this cost?” But before he could, Uncle Gagrath **threw himself adoringly at her paws**. “Dear Chintzina, I thought you were beautiful before, but now you are really **stunning!**”

“It’s true, you look **gorgeous!**” said Thea

approvingly. “That new furdo really brings out the **sparkle** in your eyes!”

Chintzina gave Uncle Gagrut a kiss on the whiskers. “Dearest Gagrut, it’s not the **clothes**, the **jewelry**, and the **perfume** that make me look so beautiful! Your faith in me has helped me regain faith in myself! You’ve helped me **REALIZE** that the best beauty secret in the world is **love**!”

“Huh?” Uncle Samuel snorted. “**love**? A beauty secret?”

“Oh, yes,” Chintzina sighed.

“**love** changes you inside and out — and the best part is, it’s **free**!”





Uncle Samuel stammered, “Y-yes, but the clothes, jewelry, and all the rest aren’t *free*, and who will **pay** for it? Chintzina doesn’t have a dime!”

I was outraged at Uncle Samuel’s shoddy treatment of his sister. So I stepped forward and said, “I will pay for it! Consider it my *wedding gift* to Aunt Chintzina.”

Uncle Gagrat shook his snout. “That’s very kind of you, Nephew, but I will pay. I am *happy* to make my future **wife** happy.”

But Chintzina put out her paws to both





of us. “Thank you, Geronimo. Thank you, Gagratt. You are true *gentlemice*. But I don’t need your help — I can pay for it on my own!”

“That’s right!” Thea **SHOUTED**.
“She can pay for it on her own!”

Uncle Samuel *opened his eyes wide*.
“Huh? On her own? How?”

Aunt Chintzina giggled under her whiskers.
“This morning, when I went out with my *friends*, I visited all of the boutiques in the city. *And guess what, Samuel?* I only know



how to make **socks**, but a lot of rodents like my socks! They are really *fashionable* in New Mouse City right now!”

Thea turned on the television. A journalist appeared and **ANNOUNCED**, “A new trend has spread through the city: **MULTICOLORED** socks! All the trendiest rodents simply **MUST** have a pair! The trend began this morning at the most fashionable boutique in the city. It seems that the socks are the work of a certain **Chintzina** *Stingysnout*. We are searching for her so she can give us an interview!”

A moment later, the phone rang: It was *journalists* looking for Chintzina! Every **boutique** on Mouse Island wanted to buy her socks. And the **bank** wanted to offer her a loan to open her own sock boutique!



“Way to go, Chintzina! Sock it to 'em!”
cried Trap, giving her a hearty slap on the back.

**We would like to give Chintzina
Stingysnout a loan!
We would like to interview Chintzina Stingysnout!
We would like to order a hundred pairs
of Chintzina Stingysnout's designer socks!**



Love is good for you...

Love is good for you! It warms your heart.

Yes, love gets you off to a great start!

You'll find yourself smiling if love you learn —

Happiness, joy, and contentment you'll earn.

Love yourself above all.

Rich or poor's not important at all.

Inside your heart, you'll find life's true measure —

You'll discover love is your greatest treasure!

If you love the world and those around you,

You'll find that friends surround you.



Love is good for you —



Give them your trust, respect
their feelings.

You'll see love can do all kinds of
healing!

Love the nature that surrounds you:

Flowers, fields, and oceans around you!

Even a small insect should be respected.

All's worth loving, nothing neglected!

Love is good for you! It warms your heart.

Yes, love gets you off to a great start!

You'll find yourself smiling if love you learn —

Happiness, joy, and contentment you'll earn.





HOW ABOUT A DANCE?

The day of the wedding was upon us in no time. The ceremony was beautiful, and the food at the reception was *whisker-licking-good*! My cousin Trap **cooked for everyone**. He might be a trickster, but he's also a *fabumouse* chef!

After the meal, the *music* began.

It was right at that moment that I **smelled some sweet rose** perfume. A high-pitched squeak screeched in my ear: "Hi, Geronimo! Nice ceremony, isn't it?!"

It was *Zelda Stingysneut*, Stevie's journalist cousin! Her furdo was combed into a fluffy pompadour and she had a **red rose** pinned in front of her ear. She was



wearing a black dress with a **heart-shaped** pendant inscribed with her initials, **Z.S.** On her paws were **STEEL** high heels that looked like they'd crush your toes if she happened to step on them.

"You're right, Zelda," I replied. "Chintzina and Uncle Gagrat make a great couple!"

Zelda winked at me. "Don't you think *we* would make a great **couple**, Geronimo? How about a dance?"



Name: Zelda

Last name: Stingysnout

Who she is: A distant relative of Geronimo Stilton

Profession: Journalist. She writes the "Romantic Rodent" column for The Daily Rat, rival newspaper of The Rodent's Gazette.

Distinguishing characteristics: She always wears a red rose in her furdo.

Hooray for the



What a fabumouse party!

You look gorgeous!
This is the happiest
day of my life!

Hooray!

Ha ha ha!!

Bride and Groom!



What a beautiful dress!

Best of luck!

Congratulations!

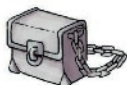
Mmmm, how delicious



Before I could reply, Zelda grabbed my paw and dragged me out to the middle of the dance floor.

“Make spaaaaace!” she shrieked to the rodents around us. Then she pulled me into a **sweeping** waltz, making me spin around like a top!





MARTIAL ARTS?!?

Desperate to make conversation as we **DANCED**, I asked *Zelda*, “So, you’re an expert on **romance**, right? What do you do during your free time? **Do you write poetry? Paint? Embroider?**” Those were the most romantic hobbies I could think of.

“Of course not!” Zelda exclaimed. “Those are way too tame for a sportsmouse like me! I am a practitioner of **MARTIAL ARTS.**”

“MARTIAL ARTS?” I asked, surprised.
“Really?”





“You betcha!” Zelda responded. “Here, let me show you. . . . - *haaaiiiiiiyaaaaaaa!*”

Before I could protest, Zelda began demonstrating her karate moves.

First she stuck a finger in my **EYE**.

Then she flung her paws against my **CHEST**.

Next she boxed my **ears** with the purse.

I fell **flat on my snout** in the middle of the room.

She twirled around. “*Haaiiiyaaaa!!!*” she shouted, stepping on my tail with her **STEEL** heels.





I lay on the floor, moaning like a gerbil who'd fallen off his wheel.

"Oh, dear!" Zelda cried. "For such a handsome mouse, you are awfully **FRAGILE**! But have no fear. Your Zelda-bear will take good care of you!"

When they saw me curled up on the floor, all the relatives *gathered* around and began gossiping.

"What happened?"

"Well, it looks like *Geronimo* wants to marry *Zelda*. He got down on his paws to propose!"

"Oh, that's so *romantic*!"

"So there's going to be another *wedding*!"

"Well, no, you see, she **REJECTED** him. . . ."

"Oh! I heard he's already dating someone. . . ."

"Yes, a certain *Pezunia Pezzy Paws*. . . ."



“What a fickle rodent he is!”

“Yes, Zelda is really mad. . . . She stepped on his tail with her **STEEL** heels. . . .”

“Poor Geronimo . . .”

At first, I was too weak to protest. But as soon as I got my breath back, I **yelled** with the last of my energy, “*Oh, for the love of cheese, I don’t want to get married! That is, er, I don’t want to marry Zelda!*”

Zelda put her paws on her hips. “Is that so, Geronimo? Well, that’s good, because I wouldn’t marry you if you were the **last**

rodent on Mouse Island!” She turned her tail and stomped off, her steel heels clicking.

I sighed with **relief**. That Zelda was quite a mouse!





A LONG, LONG, LONG TRIP

I said good-bye to **Uncle Samuel** and all the other ***Stingy Snouts***, who hugged me one by one. By now we had become good friends! I even said good-bye to **Zelda**, who had decided to forgive me. She whispered in my ear, “So, handsome, when will **see each other** again?”



BLUSHING, I replied, “Good-bye, Zelda. Er, I’m sure we’ll see each other again — sooner or later!” I jumped in Thea’s car to **LEAVE** for New Mouse City.

“Come on, Thea. We’re leaving!” I shouted.



As soon as we drove out of sight, I let out a sigh of relief. Zelda meant **well**, but I am way too big a 'fraidy mouse to date her!

We drove all **NIGHT**, until finally, at dawn, we reached New Mouse City.

I stopped at home to drop off my bags. I took a quick shower, nibbled on a **snack** (hot cheese and a cheddar muffin), and then **scampered** over to *The Rodent's Gazette*.

I entered the office **WHISTLING**. I am always in a good mood when I go to work, because **I love my job!** Plus all the rodents who work at the newspaper are my **friends**.

I scurried into the editorial office. The reporters, photographers, illustrators, and designers were all busy in a meeting.

**Who knew what they were
squeaking about?**





I'M A DEAD MOOOOUUUUUUSE!

“What are you squeaking about?”

I asked curiously.

“Geronimo, while you were away, we thought of a **new idea**,” Priscilla Prettywhiskers answered.

I smiled. “Great! I love new ideas.”

“You remember we were supposed to *create a new column*?” Priscilla continued.

“Oh, yes, of course, the new column!” I replied.

“Well, we realized we didn’t have a *romance* column, so we approached the most famous love expert in all of New Mouse City. She used to work for *The Daily Rat*, but I am happy to tell you, Geronimo, that this rodent



(who coincidentally is an admirer of yours)
has already signed a contract!"

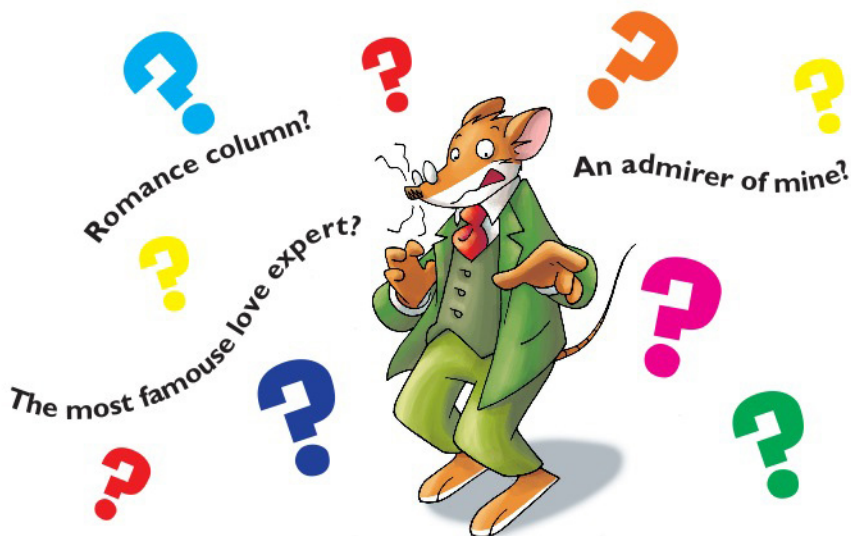
A light went off in my head.

Romance column?

The most famous love expert?

An admirer of mine?

"In fact, I believe she is also one of your distant relatives," Priscilla went on. "Her name is . . ."





I leaped up. “**WHAT'S HER NAME???**”

Shorty Tao, Patty Plumprat, Gigi Gogo, Merenguita Gingermouse, and Dolly Fastpaws all shouted, “Her name is ***Zelda Stingysnout!!!***”

“Zelda Stingysnout?” I gasped. “Holey cheese, I am a **DEAD MOUUUUUSE!**”



At that moment, I heard a familiar squeak. “**Hey, handsome**, aren’t you thrilled? I’m coming to work for you! Now we can see each other every day! Are you happy now, ***you fine-furred fellow?*** Kissy kissy kissy, ***you adorable mouse, you lovable rat, you sweet little snuggle bunny!***”

That was the last thing I heard before I **FRANTED**.

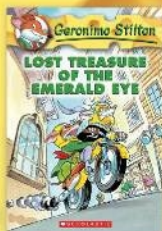
My staff had to revive me with **stinky cheese** salts.



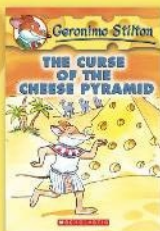
Well, dear reader, I bet you'd like to know what happened once Zelda came to work with us. And I'd **like** to tell you. But that's a story for another day, or my name isn't *Geronimo Stilton!*



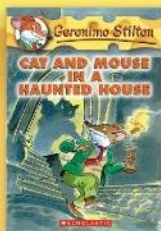
**Don't miss
any of my
fabumouse
adventures!**



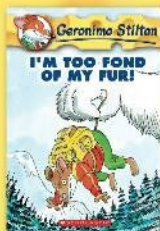
**#1 Lost Treasure
of the Emerald Eye**



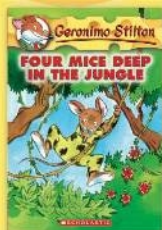
**#2 The Curse
of the Cheese
Pyramid**



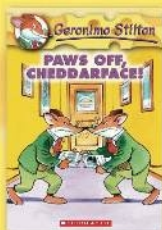
**#3 Cat and
Mouse in a
Haunted House**



**#4 I'm Too Fond
of My Fur!**



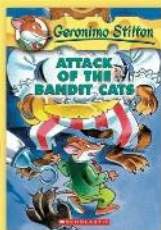
**#5 Four Mice
Deep in the Jungle**



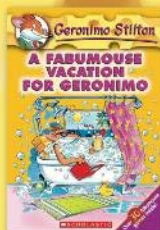
**#6 Paws Off,
Cheddarface!**



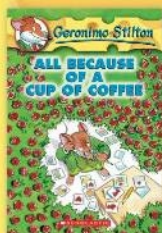
**#7 Red Pizzas for
a Blue Count**



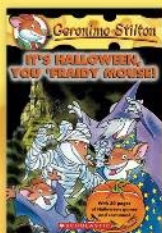
**#8 Attack of the
Bandit Cats**



**#9 A Fabumouse
Vacation for
Geronimo**



**#10 All Because of
a Cup of Coffee**



**#11 It's
Halloween, You
'Fraidy Mouse!**



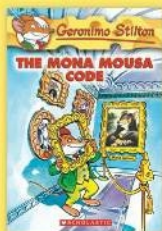
**#12 Merry
Christmas,
Geronimo!**



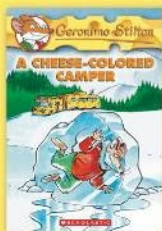
**#13 The Phantom
of the Subway**



**#14 The Temple of
the Ruby of Fire**



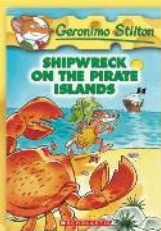
**#15 The Mona
Mousa Code**



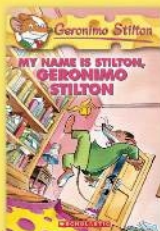
**#16 A Cheese-
Colored Camper**



**#17 Watch Your
Whiskers, Stilton!**



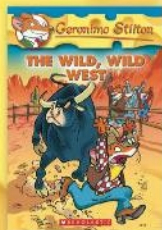
**#18 Shipwreck on
the Pirate Islands**



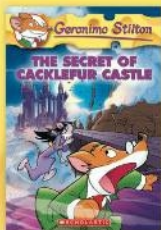
**#19 My Name Is
Stilton, Geronimo
Stilton**



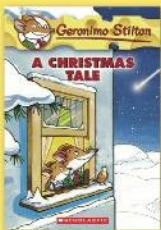
**#20 Surf's Up,
Geronimo!**



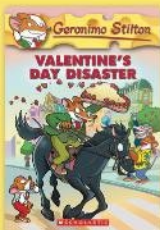
**#21 The Wild,
Wild West**



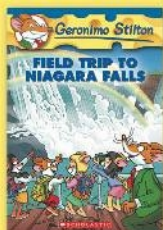
**#22 The Secret
of Cacklefur
Castle**



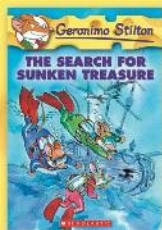
A Christmas Tale



**#23 Valentine's
Day Disaster**



**#24 Field Trip to
Niagara Falls**



**#25 The Search
for Sunken
Treasure**



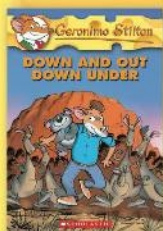
**#26 The Mummy
with No Name**



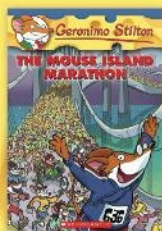
**#27 The
Christmas Toy
Factory**



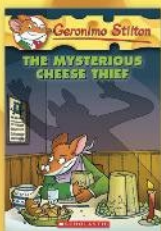
**#28 Wedding
Crasher**



**#29 Down and
Out Down Under**



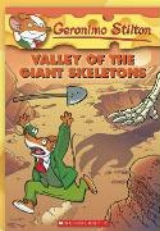
**#30 The Mouse
Island Marathon**



**#31 The
Mysterious
Cheese Thief**



**Christmas
Catastrophe**



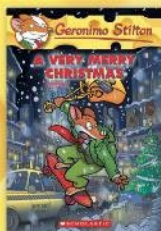
**#32 Valley of the
Giant Skeletons**



**#33 Geronimo
and the Gold
Medal Mystery**



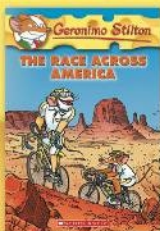
**#34 Geronimo
Stilton, Secret
Agent**



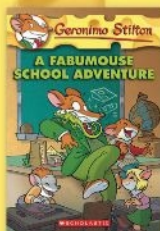
**#35 A Very Merry
Christmas**



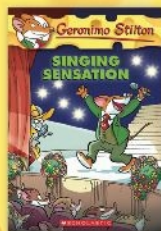
**#36 Geronimo's
Valentine**



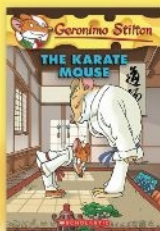
**#37 The Race
Across America**



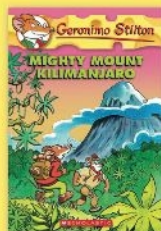
#38 A Fabumouse School Adventure



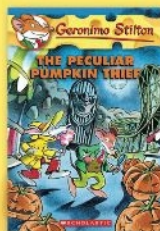
#39 Singing Sensation



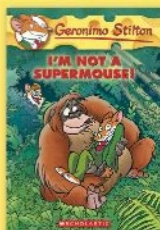
#40 The Karate Mouse



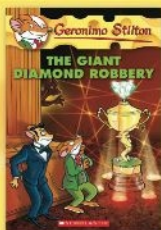
#41 Mighty Mount Kilimanjaro



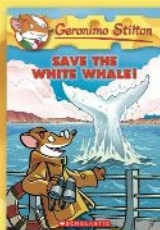
#42 The Peculiar Pumpkin Thief



#43 I'm Not a Supermouse!



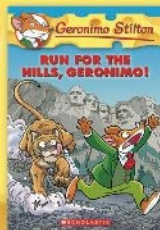
#44 The Giant Diamond Robbery



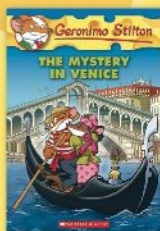
#45 Save the White Whale!



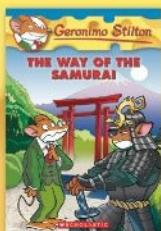
#46 The Haunted Castle



#47 Run for the Hills, Geronimo!



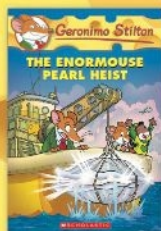
#48 The Mystery in Venice



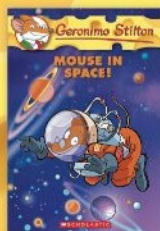
#49 The Way of the Samurai



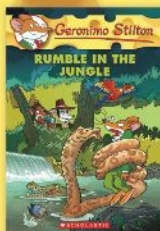
#50 This Hotel Is Haunted



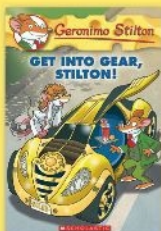
#51 The Enormouse Pearl Heist



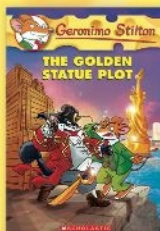
#52 Mouse in Space!



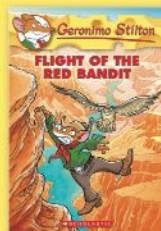
#53 Rumble in the Jungle



#54 Get into Gear, Stilton!



#55 The Golden Statue Plot



#56 Flight of the Red Bandit



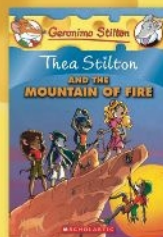
**Special Edition:
The Hunt for the Golden Book**



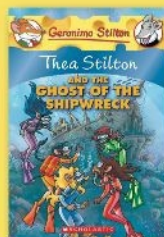
**Check out
these exciting
Thea Sisters
adventures!**



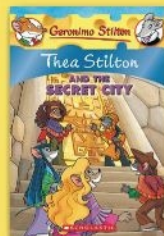
**Thea Stilton and the
Dragon's Code**



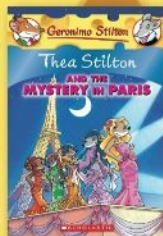
**Thea Stilton and the
Mountain of Fire**



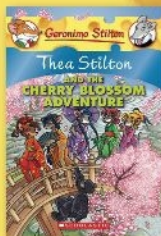
**Thea Stilton and the
Ghost of the Shipwreck**



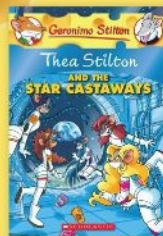
**Thea Stilton and the
Secret City**



**Thea Stilton and the
Mystery in Paris**



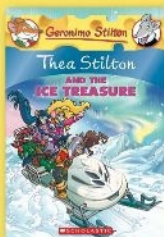
**Thea Stilton and the
Cherry Blossom Adventure**



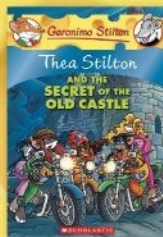
**Thea Stilton and the
Star Castaways**



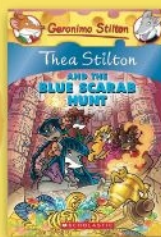
**Thea Stilton: Big Trouble
in the Big Apple**



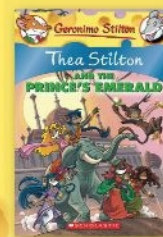
**Thea Stilton and the
Ice Treasure**



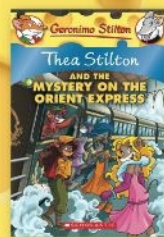
**Thea Stilton and the
Secret of the Old Castle**



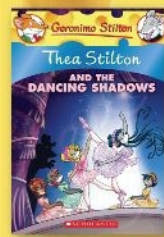
**Thea Stilton and the
Blue Scarab Hunt**



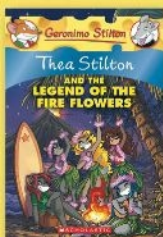
**Thea Stilton and the
Prince's Emerald**



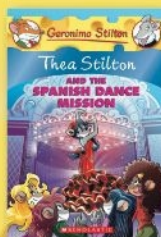
**Thea Stilton and the Mystery
on the Orient Express**



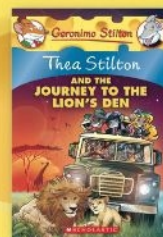
**Thea Stilton and the
Dancing Shadows**



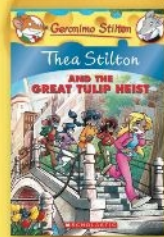
**Thea Stilton and the
Legend of the Fire
Flowers**



**Thea Stilton and the
Spanish Dance Mission**



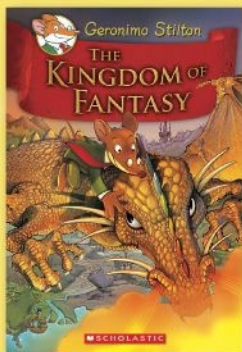
**Thea Stilton and the
Journey to the Lion's Den**



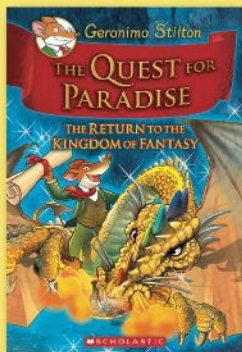
**Thea Stilton and the
Great Tulip Heist**



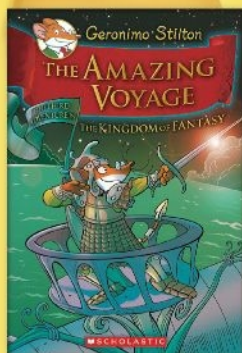
Be sure
to read all
my adventures
in the Kingdom
of Fantasy!



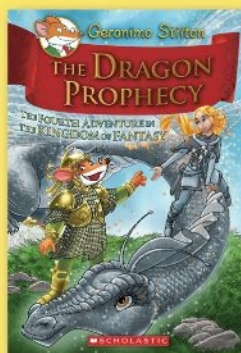
**THE KINGDOM
OF FANTASY**



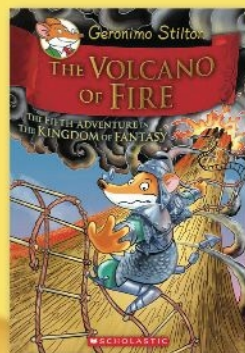
**THE QUEST FOR
PARADISE:
THE RETURN TO THE
KINGDOM OF FANTASY**



**THE AMAZING
VOYAGE:
THE THIRD ADVENTURE
IN THE KINGDOM
OF FANTASY**



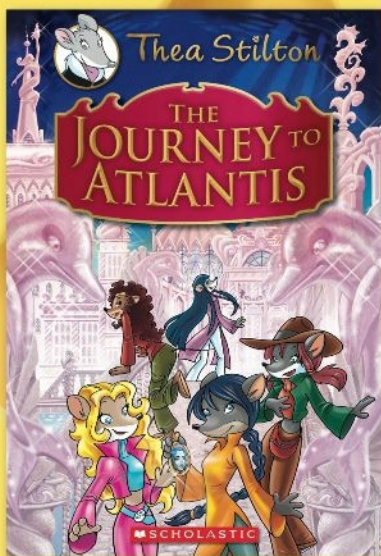
**THE DRAGON
PROPHECY:
THE FOURTH ADVENTURE
IN THE KINGDOM
OF FANTASY**



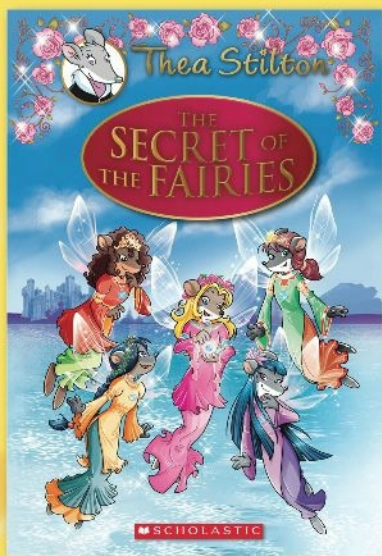
**THE VOLCANO
OF FIRE:
THE FIFTH ADVENTURE
IN THE KINGDOM
OF FANTASY**



Check out
these very
special editions
featuring me
and the Thea
Sisters!



THE JOURNEY
TO ATLANTIS

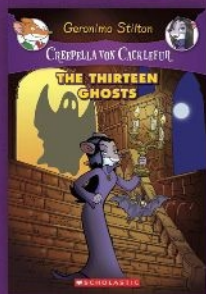


THE SECRET OF
THE FAIRIES

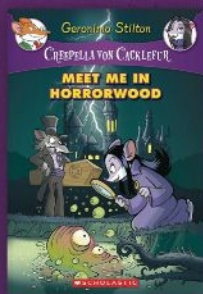


Meet CREEPELLA VON CACKLEFUR

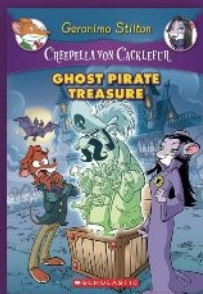
I, *Geronimo Stilton*, have a lot of mouse friends, but none as **spooky** as my friend **CREEPELLA VON CACKLEFUR**! She is an enchanting and **MYSTERIOUS** mouse with a pet bat named **Bitewing**. **YIKES!** I'm a real 'fraidy mouse, but even I think **CREEPELLA** and her family are **AWFULLY** fascinating. I can't wait for you to read all about **CREEPELLA** in these **fa-mouse-ly funny** and **spectacularly spooky** tales!



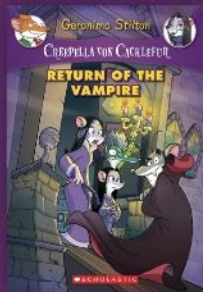
#1 The Thirteen Ghosts



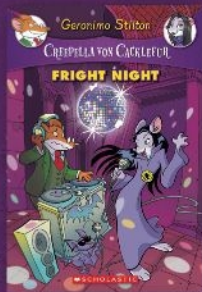
#2 Meet Me In Horrorwood



#3 Ghost Pirate Treasure



#4 Return of the Vampire

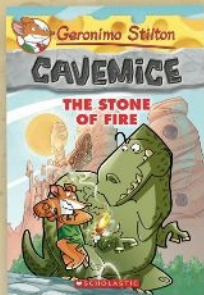


#5 Fright Night

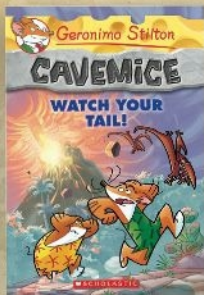


Meet GERONIMO STILTONOOT

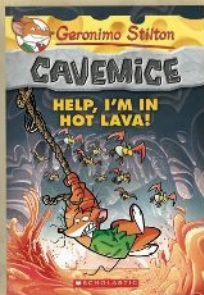
He is a cavemouse — Geronimo Stilton's ancient ancestor! He runs the stone newspaper in the prehistoric village of Old Mouse City. From dealing with dinosaurs to dodging meteorites, his life in the Stone Age is full of adventure!



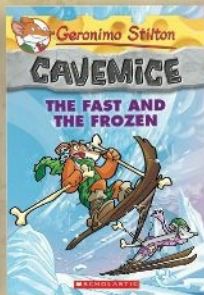
#1 The Stone
of Fire



#2 Watch Your
Tail!



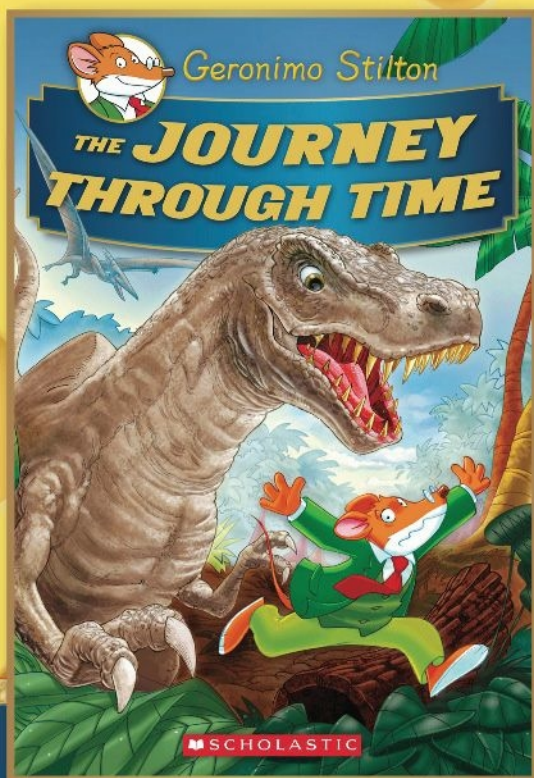
#3 Help, I'm in
Hot Lava!



#4 The Fast and
the Frozen



Join me and my friends on
a journey through time in
this very special edition!



THE JOURNEY
THROUGH TIME

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Born in New Mouse City, Mouse Island, **GERONIMO STILTON** is Rattus Emeritus of Mousomorphic Literature and of Neo-Ratonic Comparative Philosophy. For the past twenty years, he has been running *The Rodent's Gazette*, New Mouse City's most widely read daily newspaper.

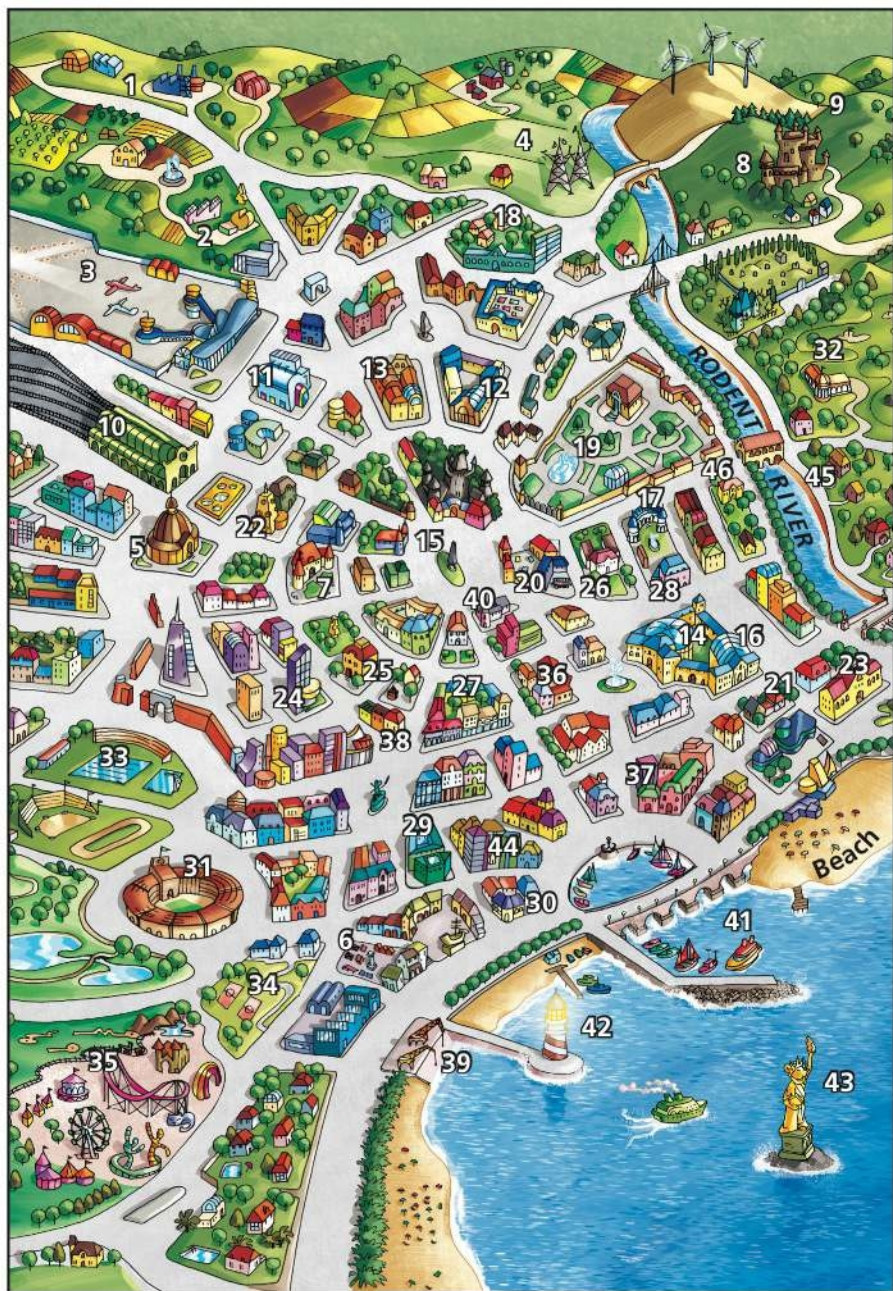
Stilton was awarded the Ratitzer Prize for his scoops on *The Curse of the Cheese Pyramid* and *The Search for Sunken Treasure*. He has also received the Andersen 2000 Prize for Personality of the Year. One of his bestsellers won the 2002 eBook Award for world's best ratlings' electronic book. His works have been published all over the globe.

In his spare time, Mr. Stilton collects antique cheese rinds and plays golf. But what he most enjoys is telling stories to his nephew Benjamin.



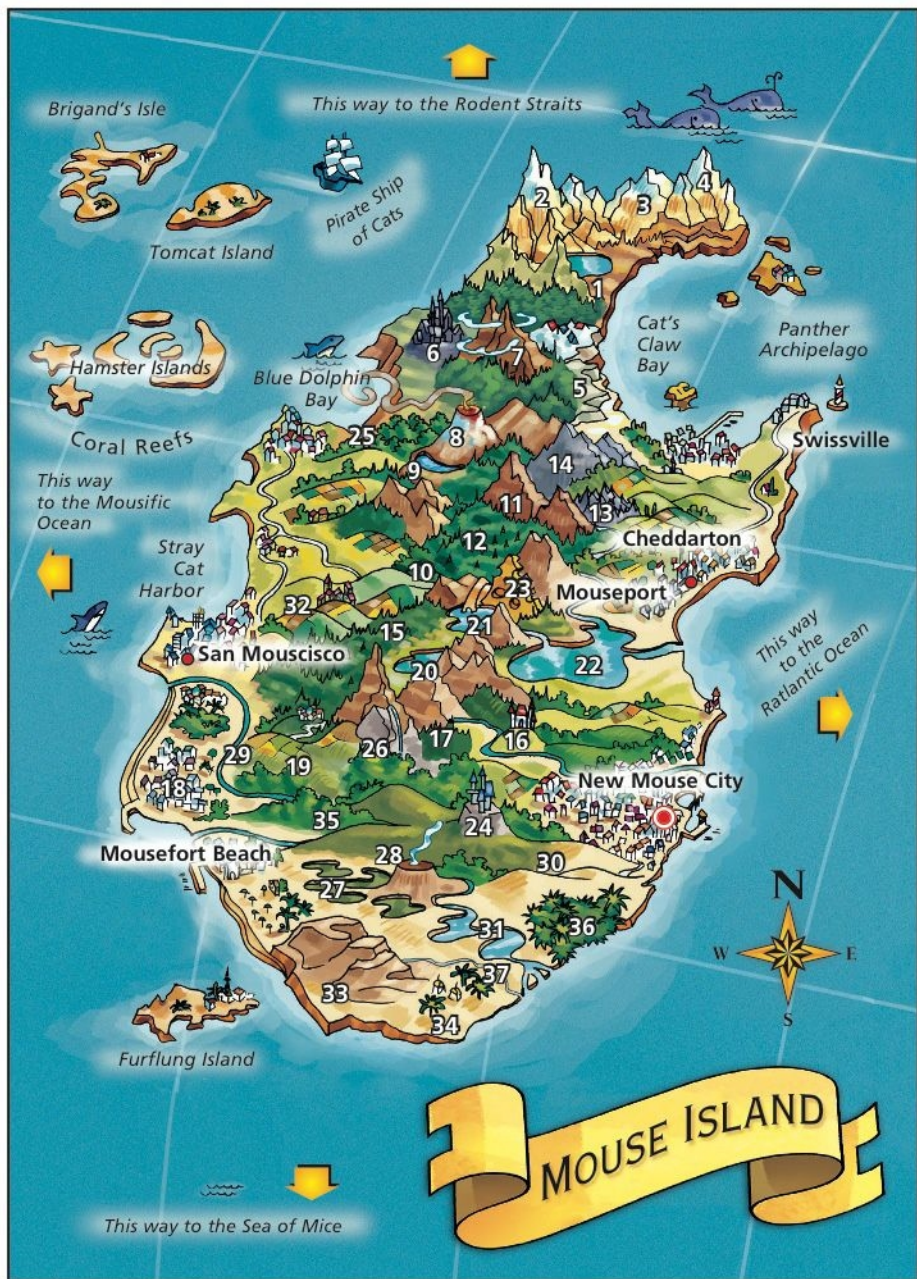
1. Main entrance
2. Printing presses (where the books and newspaper are printed)
3. Accounts department
4. Editorial room (where the editors, illustrators, and designers work)
5. Geronimo Stilton's office
6. Helicopter landing pad

*THE RODENT'S
GAZETTE*



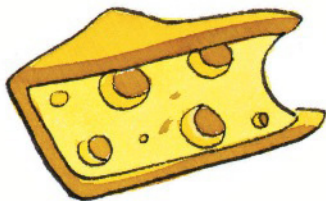
Map of New Mouse City

1. Industrial Zone
2. Cheese Factories
3. Angorat International Airport
4. WRAT Radio and Television Station
5. Cheese Market
6. Fish Market
7. Town Hall
8. Snotnose Castle
9. The Seven Hills of Mouse Island
10. Mouse Central Station
11. Trade Center
12. Movie Theater
13. Gym
14. Catnegie Hall
15. Singing Stone Plaza
16. The Gouda Theater
17. Grand Hotel
18. Mouse General Hospital
19. Botanical Gardens
20. Cheap Junk for Less (Trap's store)
21. Aunt Sweetfur and Benjamin's House
22. Mouseum of Modern Art
23. University and Library
24. *The Daily Rat*
25. *The Rodent's Gazette*
26. Trap's House
27. Fashion District
28. The Mouse House Restaurant
29. Environmental Protection Center
30. Harbor Office
31. Mousidon Square Garden
32. Golf Course
33. Swimming Pool
34. Tennis Courts
35. Curlyfur Island Amusement Park
36. Geronimo's House
37. Historic District
38. Public Library
39. Shipyard
40. Thea's House
41. New Mouse Harbor
42. Luna Lighthouse
43. The Statue of Liberty
44. Hercule Poirat's Office
45. Petunia Pretty Paws's House
46. Grandfather William's House



Map of Mouse Island

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Big Ice Lake | 21. Lake Lakelake |
| 2. Frozen Fur Peak | 22. Lake Lakelakelake |
| 3. Slipperyslopes Glacier | 23. Cheddar Crag |
| 4. Coldcreeps Peak | 24. Cannycat Castle |
| 5. Ratzikistan | 25. Valley of the Giant Sequoia |
| 6. Transratania | 26. Cheddar Springs |
| 7. Mount Vamp | 27. Sulfurous Swamp |
| 8. Roastedrat Volcano | 28. Old Reliable Geyser |
| 9. Brimstone Lake | 29. Vole Vale |
| 10. Poopedcat Pass | 30. Ravingrat Ravine |
| 11. Stinko Peak | 31. Gnat Marshes |
| 12. Dark Forest | 32. Munster Highlands |
| 13. Vain Vampires Valley | 33. Mousehara Desert |
| 14. Goose Bumps Gorge | 34. Oasis of the Sweaty Camel |
| 15. The Shadow Line Pass | 35. Cabbagehead Hill |
| 16. Penny Pincher Castle | 36. Rattytrap Jungle |
| 17. Nature Reserve Park | 37. Rio Mosquito |
| 18. Las Ratayas Marinas | |
| 19. Fossil Forest | |
| 20. Lake Lake | |



Dear mouse friends,
Thanks for reading, and farewell
till the next book.
It'll be another whisker-licking-good
adventure, and that's a promise!



Geronimo Stilton



GERONIMO STILTON



THEA



TRAP



BENJAMIN

Who is Geronimo Stilton?

That's me! I run a newspaper, but my true passion is writing adventure stories. Here in New Mouse City, the capital of Mouse Island, my books are all bestsellers! My stories are funny, fa-mouse-ly funny. They are whisker-licking-good tales, and that's a promise!

THE HAUNTED CASTLE

I was just minding my business at home when I got a telephone call from my uncle Samuel S. Stingysnout. He wanted to invite the entire Stilton family to creepy, faraway Penny Pincher Castle for a big surprise. Moldy mozzarella—I'm not much of a traveling mouse, and I hate surprises. But Thea, Trap, and Benjamin were going, so I couldn't say no. I could tell this was going to be one super-spooky trip!

 **SCHOLASTIC**

[www.scholastic.com/
geronimostilton](http://www.scholastic.com/geronimostilton)

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